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Letter dated 1 December 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to refer to Security Council resolution 2313 (2016), in which the Council took note of my intention to develop a package that would provide material assistance and support to those Haitians directly affected by cholera. The present letter lays out the details of the new approach. Further details are being provided to the General Assembly in my report (A/71/620).

The United Nations has always been in Haiti for one reason: to assist the people in building a better future and fulfilling their democratic aspirations. Since 2004, these efforts have been carried out in part by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, working alongside the United Nations country team.

The people of Haiti have faced many challenges during that time, including endemic poverty, political instability and vacuums of governance. These challenges have been compounded by the devastating earthquake in 2010 and, more recently, by Hurricane Matthew. The United Nations has responded to these challenges in solidarity with the people of Haiti.

One challenge, however, has cast a shadow. Cholera broke out in Haiti in October 2010. Coming only nine months after the earthquake, this was an additional blow for which Haiti was ill prepared. Only one quarter of the population has access to decent toilets and one half to clean water, making it the country with the poorest water and sanitation system in the western hemisphere. Cholera ultimately afflicted nearly 800,000 people and may have caused more than 9,000 deaths.

From the outset, the United Nations, with support from the international community, devoted considerable effort and resources to respond, providing emergency health and humanitarian measures to reduce transmission. Over the following six years, various initiatives were undertaken to mobilize the resources and interventions necessary for the elimination of the disease from the country.

I visited Haiti several times to assess the situation and to demonstrate my solidarity with the people. I appointed a series of high-level officials to raise the profile of the issue and to bring in extra funding.

Thanks to such concerted international and Haitian efforts, the overall incidence of the disease has been reduced by approximately 90 per cent since its peak in 2011.

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However, these efforts have not been enough.

Cholera continues to take a heavy toll on the lives of the people of Haiti, and Haiti is still reporting the highest number of cholera cases in the world. Already in 2016, we have seen a rise in cases, directly attributable to reduced funding, which has resulted in a deterioration in the capacity to respond to and treat cholera.

Convinced that we needed to do more, on 19 August 2016, I announced a new approach to cholera in Haiti to concretely demonstrate deep regret for the suffering of the Haitian people as a result of the epidemic. I will speak further on this when I address the General Assembly on 1 December.

The new approach has two tracks. Track 1 consists of a greatly intensified and better-resourced effort to respond to and reduce the incidence of cholera in Haiti. This is the most meaningful contribution that the United Nations can make. The aim is to significantly improve access to care and treatment and to address the longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health-care systems. Work on track 1 is well under way and is detailed in my report to the General Assembly.

Cholera can be controlled and eliminated with sufficient funds to ensure proper and timely treatment. I have established the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund to provide a channel for funding for both tracks of the new approach. To date, funding shortages have made it impossible to fully treat or eliminate what is generally a treatable and preventable disease. Hurricane Matthew, which destroyed much of the south-west of the country, has contributed to a doubling of the number of suspected cholera cases per month, from a little more than 2,000 in September to nearly 6,000 in early November 2016. Our fundraising efforts therefore continue with great urgency.

In addition to the forward-looking steps under track 1, my new approach includes a second track that focuses specifically on those Haitians most directly affected by cholera, their families and communities, and will provide a package of material assistance and support.

Track 2 would consist of a community-based approach whereby affected communities would receive assistance and support through community-based projects and initiatives that are responsive to priorities articulated by the communities themselves and linked in general to and coordinated with work under track 1.

Consideration was given to an individual approach for the households of those who died of cholera; however, we discovered that there would be substantial difficulties involved, including in identifying those who died and their family members. Such an approach would require further exploration, including through on-the-ground consultations with victims and their communities, while recognizing the challenges, risks and constraints.

I am committed to engaging affected communities in the design of track 2. However, to engage in consultations, and thereby raise expectations, without any assurance of funding would be counterproductive. The limited responses in fundraising for the response to Hurricane Matthew and cholera elimination have highlighted the reality in which we are working.

The consensus view expressed during the preliminary consultations is that the two overriding priorities for Haiti are to eliminate cholera and to respond to the devastating effects of Hurricane Matthew. The new approach of the United Nations, contained in my report to the General Assembly, is premised on the assumption that sufficient additional voluntary funding will be made available to deliver on track 2 without detracting from track 1. However, the possibility that the incoming Secretary-General may need to propose a multi-funded approach cannot be excluded.

Eliminating cholera from Haiti and living up to our moral duty to those who have been most directly affected is a collective responsibility of the Organization. It will require the full commitment of the international community. Our response is a test of our commitment to the most vulnerable of those whom we serve. It is also important for the global reputation of peacekeeping.

The people of Haiti deserve this tangible expression of our solidarity and the genuine support that comes with it.

I intend to proceed with the implementation of the new approach, to the extent that it falls within my purview.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon